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ABSTRACT

Three basic concepts of education for employment are discussed. It is stated that vocational and academic education can no longer be compartmentalized. Education is mandatory for employment in modern society. Vocational education should be a basic objective of all education. Second, technological and economic progress demand change. Appropriately prepared persons must be highly adaptable, and this is viewed as requiring continuous learning. Finally, freedom of opportunity is measured by the individual range of choice. Education can increase this range. From these, five operation principles are discussed: not limiting vocational education to particular skills, school assistance, formal occupational preparation, and development of the individual. A unified system of vocational educational education is seen as necessary. It should begin in the lowest grades and continue throughout the educational experience. The curriculum should be spiral, and postsecondary occupational preparation should be a goal. The program should include fieldwork, and the school's obligation should continue past graduation. Creation of an occupational preparation system must be a continuing pursuit. (SLD)

Note that page 4 contains a recommendation that all junior high school students study "the economic and industrial system by which goods and services are produced and distributed." The Darcy & Powell MANPOWER AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION program provides this type of material.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
THE BRIDGE BETWEEN MAN AND HIS WORK

Publication 1

HIGHLIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, 1968

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Office of Education

IV. BASIC CONCEPTS OF EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

As earlier sections have shown, the Vocational Education Act of 1963 in many ways charted a major reorientation of vocational education. However, in the brief time available, the promise of the act has not been realized. Meantime the world of work and the problems of preparation for it, access to it, and sucessful performance in it have become even more complex. Out of the changing social and economic environment of the past two decades has emerged clearer concepts of career development, some new and some modifications of earlier ones. From these concepts we can draw operational principles and design a system of legislative and administrative changes necessary for achieving vocational education for all. Three concepts are particularly relevant to this report.

ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

It is no longer possible to compartmentalize education into general, academic, and vocational components. Education is a crucial element in preparation for a successful working career at any level. With rising average educational attainment, better educated people are available so that the employer seldom needs to accept the less educated. If it represents nothing else, a high school diploma is evidence of consistency, persistence, some degree of self discipline, and perhaps even of docility. The relevance of education for employment arises from better educated labor and a technology that requires it. The educational skills of spoken and written communication, computation, analytical techniques, knowledge of society and one's role in it, and skill in human relations are as vital as the skills of particular occupations.

On the other hand, employability skills are equally essential to education. If education is preparation for life, and if practically everyone's life and opportunities for self-expression and self-fulfillment include work, then only the successfully employable are successfully educated. American society is achievement oriented and attributes [illegible] to the nonstriver and nonachiever. Calling [illegible] inseparable and inseverable aspects of humanity.

Vocational education is not a separate discipline within education, but it is a basic objective of all education and must be a basic element of each person's education. It is also a teaching technique which may have even more to offer as method than as substance. As a selecting out process for the professions, education has fostered, stressed, and rewarded the verbal skills important to these pursuits. It has given too little attention to development of attitudes, manipulative skills, and adaptability to new situations. In the process of emphasizing verbal skills, the predominant methods of instruction are lecture and discussion, and little attention is given to the alternative technique of learning by doing. As discussed earlier, for many students, the techniques of vocational education can supply a core around which an attractive package of academic as well as skill content can be prepared which will be more palatable and useful to undermotivated students than either alone. This may be most applicable to those from deprived environments whose verbal experiences have been limited and whose time horizons have been shortened by expectation of failure. Skill development can be accomplished through work experience or through education in the school's shops and laboratories. The key is to build a better means of integrating academic education, skill training, and work experience. The common objective should be a successful life in which employment has a crucial role.

THE CONSTANCY OF CHANGE

The second premise is by now a cliche: "Nothing will henceforth be more constant than change." Technological and economic progress feeds on itself, opening new vistas and closing the old. The underprepared are threatened by displacement, and the well prepared are confronted with new opportunities. Both require adaptability. Preventive measures can reduce the demand for remedial programs but never eliminate the need for them. Appropriately prepared persons may be highly adaptable, but that adaptability may depend upon upgrading present skills as well as acquiring new ones. The need for continuous learning, formal or informal, will certainly become universal. There will always be those with inadequate preventive occupational preparation who will need remedial help.

The demand upon vocational education is clear: Programs for youth must prepare them for change; programs for adults must be universally available, and must emphasize coping with change.

TOWARD FREEDOM OF OPPORTUNITY

Finally, the most treasured value of our society is the worth and freedom of the individual. Each individual is entitled to the benefits of a social system which will make it possible for him to get from where he is to where he has the potential to be. One operational measure of freedom is the range of choice available to the individual. The major constraints upon the range of choice are ignorance and poverty and disease and discrimination. Education can reduce the barriers of ignorance and proper occupational preparation can lower the barriers of poverty. They cannot eliminate disease and discrimination but they can substantially contribute to overcoming them.

OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

A number of operational principles follow from these premises:

1. Vocational education cannot be meaningfully limited to the skills necessary for a particular occupation. It is more appropriately defined as all of those aspects of educational experience which help a person to discover his talents, to relate them to the world of work, to choose an occupation, and to refine his talents and use them successfully in employment. In fact, orientation and assistance in vocational choice may often be more valid determinants of employment success, and therefore more profitable uses of educational funds, than specific skill training.

2. In a technology where only relative economic costs, not engineering know-how, prevent mechanization of routine tasks, the age of "human use of human beings" may be within reach, but those human beings must be equipped to do tasks which machines cannot do. Where complex instructions and sophisticated decisions mark the boundary between the realm of man and the role of the machine, there is no longer room for any dichotomy between intellectual competence and manipulative skills and, therefore, between academic and vocational education.

3. In a labor force where most have a high school education, all who do not are at a serious competitive disadvantage. But at the same time, a high school education alone cannot provide an automatic ticket to satisfactory and continuous employment. Education cannot shed its responsibilities to the student (and to society in his behalf) just because he has chosen to reject the system or because it has handed him a diploma. In a world where the distance between the experiences of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood and between school and work continually widen, the school must reach forward to assist the student across the gaps just as labor market institutions must reach back to assist in the transition. It is not enough to dump the school leaver into a labor market pool. The school along with the rest of society must provide him a ladder, and perhaps help him to climb it.

4. Some type of formal occupational preparation must be a part of every educational experience. Though it may be well to delay final occupational choice until all the alternatives are known, no one ought to leave the educational system without a salable skill. In addition, given the rapidity of change and the competition from generally rising educational attainment, upgrading and remedial education opportunities are a continual necessity. Those who need occupational preparation most, both preventive and remedial, will be those least prepared to take advantage of it and most difficult to educate and train. Yet for them, particularly, equal rights do not mean equal opportunity. Far more important is the demonstration of equal results.

5. The objective of vocational education should be the development of the individual, not the needs of the labor market. One of the functions of an economic system is to structure incentives in such a way that individuals will freely choose to accomplish the tasks which need to be done. Preparation for employment should be flexible and capable of adapting the system to the individual's need rather than the reverse. The system for occupational preparation should aid supply a salable skill at any terminal point chosen by the individual, yet no doors should be closed to future progress and development.

In short, an environment is emerging in which nearly all require salable skills which demand intellectual as well as manipulative content and which include the base for constant adaptation to change. An increasing amount of the knowledge necessary to success must be organized and presented in a formal manner; the pickup or observation methods of the past are no longer adequate. Rural schools with their inadequate offerings and ghetto schools with their deficient resources, added to the initial environmental handicaps of their students, can never hope, without special assistance, to gain on the quality-conscious suburban schools. Education is neither the unique cause, nor the sole cure of the problems of the rural depressed area or the urban slum. But it is a necessary factor.

V. TOWARD A UNIFIED SYSTEM OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

That most of the concepts of section IV were in the minds of the authors of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 is apparent from its declaration of purpose "that persons of all ages in all communities of the State—those in high school, those who have completed or discontinued their formal education and are preparing to enter the labor market, those who have already entered the labor market but need to upgrade their skills or learn new ones, and those with special educational handicaps—will have ready access to vocational training or retraining which is of high quality, which is realistic in the light of actual or anticipated opportunities for gainful employment, and which is suited to their needs, interests, and ability to benefit from such training."

An adequate system of vocational education capable of achieving these objectives while coping with a changing environment, should, we believe, have the following characteristics:

1. Occupational preparation should begin in the elementary schools with a realistic picture of the world of work. Its fundamental purposes should be to familiarize the student with his world and to provide him with the intellectual tools and rational habits of thought to play a satisfying role in it.

2. In junior high school economic orientation and occupational preparation should reach a more sophisticated stage with study by all students of the economic and industrial system by which goods and services are produced and distributed. The objective should be exposure to the full range of occupational choices which will be available at a later point and full knowledge of the relative advantages and the requirements of each.

3. Occupational preparation should become more specific in the high school, though preparation should not be limited to a specific occupation. Given the uncertainties of a changing economy and the limited experiences upon which vocational choices must be made, instruction should not be overly narrow but should be built around significant families of occupations or industries which promise expanding opportunities.

All students outside the college preparatory curriculum should acquire an entry-level job skill, but they should also be prepared for post-high-school vocational and technical education. Even those in the col-

lege preparatory curriculum might profit from the techniques of learning by doing. On the other hand, care should be taken that pursuit of a vocationally oriented curriculum in the high school does not block the upward progress of the competent student who later decides to pursue a college degree.

4. Occupational education should be based on a spiral curriculum which treats concepts at higher and higher levels of complexity as the student moves through the program. Vocational preparation should be used to make general education concrete and understandable; general education should point up the vocational implications of all education. Curriculum materials should be prepared for both general and vocational education to emphasize these relationships.

5. Some formal postsecondary occupational preparation for all should be a goal for the near future. Universal high school education is not yet achieved but is rapidly approaching reality. Postsecondary enrollments are growing, and before many years have passed, the labor force entrant without advanced skills gained through postsecondary education, apprenticeship, or on-the-job training will be at a serious disadvantage. Universal advanced training will bring increased productivity, higher standards of living, and greater adaptability, to the profit of the economy as well as the individual. If postsecondary education and training is to be universal, it must be free. Fourteen years of free public education with a terminal occupational emphasis should be a current goal.

6. Beyond initial preparation for employment, many, out of choice or necessity, will want to bolster an upward occupational climb with part-time and sometimes full-time, courses and programs as adults. These should be available as part of the regular public school system. They should not be limited to a few high-demand and low-cost trades, but should provide a range of occupational choice as wide as those available to students preparing for initial entry.

7. Any occupation which contributes to the good of society is a fit subject for vocational education. In the allocation of scarce resources, first attention must be paid to those occupations which offer expanding opportunities for employment. In the elementary and junior high school, attention can be paid only to groups of occupations which employ large numbers of people, and instruction must be restricted to broad principles, common skills, and pervasive attitudes which will be useful in a broad range of employment. These restrictions are less and less valid as the student goes through high school and junior college, until, in adult education, instruction is justified in even the most restricted field if it is valuable to the individual and to society.

8. Occupational preparation need not and should not be limited to the classroom, to the school shop, or to the laboratory. Many arguments favor training on the job. Expensive equipment need not be duplicated. Familiarization with the environment and discipline of the workplace is an important part of occupational preparation, yet is difficult to simulate in a classroom. Supervisors and other employees can double as instructors. The trainee learns by earning. On the other hand, the employer and his supervisors may be more production than training oriented. The operations and equipment of a particular employer may [illegible] part of a needed range of skills, necessitating transfer [illegible] employers for adequate training. The ideal is to mold the ad-

vantages of institutional and on-the-job training in formal cooperative work-study programs.

9. Effective occupational preparation is impossible if the school feels that its obligation ends when the student graduates. The school, therefore, must work with employers to build a bridge between school and work. Placing the student on a job and following up his successes and failures provides the best possible information to the school on its own strengths and weaknesses.

10. No matter how good the system of initial preparation and the opportunities for upgrading on the job, there will always be need for remedial programs. Remedial programs will differ from the preventive in that many of the students will require financial assistance while in training; the courses must be closely oriented to the labor market to assure a quick return to employment; and the trainee will be impatient of what may seem to be the frills of regular vocational programs.

11. At every level from the elementary school through the postsecondary, adult, and remedial programs there will be those with special needs as defined by the 1963 act. For both humanitarian and economic reasons, persons with special needs deserve special help.

12. Many communities are too small to muster sufficient students for a range of occupational offerings broad enough to provide realistic freedom of occupational choice. Potential students, often those with the greatest needs, live in areas too isolated for access to meaningful training. Others come from a home and neighborhood environment which makes sound preparation for life and employment difficult. An adequate system of occupational preparation will provide residential facilities wherever their absence presents an obstacle to anyone in need of education and training.

13. The public system for occupational preparation must be supported by adequate facilities and equipment, buttressed by research and innovation, and by the preparation and upgrading of competent teachers, counselors, and administrators. To assure constant improvement, it must provide for constant evaluation and reporting of problems and accomplishments.

14. The system of occupational preparation cannot operate in a vacuum. Data must be made available on public and private training opportunities to eliminate undesirable duplication. Data on supply and demand for various occupations must be available on a broader and more accurate basis. But total training opportunities must be based, not on the number of jobs which are available, but on the number of persons needing training.

Creation of the system of occupational preparation outlined here must be a continuing pursuit. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the efforts of vocational educators have carried the Nation a substantial way toward these objectives. Our recommendations which follow will, if adopted, assure further progress. But they will never end the quest because, fortunately, society does not stand still.

*Excerpts of highlights and recommendations appearing in the United States Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Subcommittee on Education, Notes and Working Papers Concerning the Administration of Programs Authorized Under Vocational Education Act of 1963, Public Law 88-210, as Amended, (Washington, D.C., March, 1968), pp. 47-52.